THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) and (b) At present, there is no such proposal. However, Forward Markets Commission (FMC) which is the regulator for commodity futures trading under the provisions of Forward Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1952, vide letter dated 23.01.2007 has directed the three National Exchanges, namely (i) Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd., (ii) National Commodity & Derivatives Exchanges Ltd., (iii) National Multi Commodity Exchange of India Ltd. to delist all contracts of Tur and Urad and to close out all outstanding positions in all tur and urad contracts at the closing price on 23.01.2007. FMC has also stated that no futher contract shall be launched without its prior approval, and permission already granted to launch contracts in urad and tur stand withdrawn.

Besides, FMC has on 27.02.2007 directed all the three National Exchanges that no new wheat and rice contract be launched. In the letter to the Exchanges, FMC has stated that permission already granted for yet to be launched contracts stands revoked and that in respect of running contracts in these commodities no new position should be allowed to be taken. Only squaring up of positions should be allowed.

(c) and (d) The Government have received request from some Associations such as Chennai Dhall Manufaturers Association, Delhi Grain Merchants Association, Grain Merchants and Dal Millers Association, National Egg Co-ordination Committee etc. to impose a ban on futures trading in essential commodities. In the context of discussion regarding whether and to what extent futures trading has contributed to price rise in agricultural commodities in recent times, the Government has set up an Expert Committee on 2.3.2007 under the Chairmanship of Professor Abhijit Sen, Member, Planning Commission to study, *inter alia*, the extent of impact, if any, of futures trading on wholesale and retails prices of agricultural commodities.

Moratorium on GM Crops

2782. SHRIMATI SYEDA ANWARA TAIMUR: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are planning to put a moratorium on the release of and Genetically Modified Crops in the country for at least 20 years;

(b) whether Government have taken steps to set up a commission to study the effects of GMCs and also to have a look at Mashelkar Committee's report which hasn't touched the core issue of GMCs;

(c) if so, the details thereof;

(d) whether Government are planning to amend the Patent Act to prevent patenting of GMCs and thereby prevent the opening of flood gates of GM products in India; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) No, Sir. The Government has no plan to put a moratorium on the release of any GM crop in India.

(b) and (c) No, Sir. The Government has not taken any steps to set up a Commission to study the effects of GMCs or to have a look at Mashelkar Committee report which has carefully considered the core issue of GMCs pertaining to the pharma sector. The recommendations of the Mashelkar Committee have been implemented by the Government in April 2006.

(d) and (e) No, Sir. The Government has no plan to amend the Patent Act to prevent the opening of flood gates of GM products in India.

"Rising level of mercury"

2783. DR. M.A.M. RAMASWAMY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the mercury level in the country is rising alarmingly;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have any policy in place to check the rising mercury level;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the steps taken to check rising level of mercury?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) and (b) All India